

CITY OF SAN JOSÉ, CALIFORNIA
Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement
801 North First Street, Room 400
San José, California 95110-1795

Hearing Date/Agenda Number
P.C. 8/10/05 Item 4.b.
C.C. 08/16/05

File Number
PDC05-019

Application Type
Planned Development Rezoning

Council District SNI
3 Washington

Planning Area
Central

Assessor's Parcel Number(s)
434-10-069, -070, -090, -091, -092

STAFF REPORT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Completed by: Lee Butler

Location: Northeast corner of Almaden Avenue and W. Alma Avenue

Gross Acreage: 0.75 Net Acreage: 0.75 Net Density: 22.6 DU/AC

Existing Zoning: CP Commercial Pedestrian & Existing Uses: Vacant
R-2 Two Family Residence

Proposed Zoning: A(PD) Planned Development Proposed Use: Up to 17 single-family attached residential units

GENERAL PLAN

Completed by: FLB

Existing Land Use/Transportation Diagram Designations
Medium High Density Residential (12 - 25 dwelling units per acre)

Project Conformance:
☒ Yes ☐ No
☐ See Analysis and Recommendations

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

Completed by: FLB

North:	Single-Family & Two-Family Residential	R-2 Two Family Residence
East:	Single-Family and Multi-Family Residential	CP Commercial Pedestrian
South:	Vacant	CP Commercial Pedestrian
West:	Vacant & Single-Family Residential	CP Commercial Pedestrian & R-2 Two Family Residence

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

Completed by: FLB

☐ Reuse of EIR
☐ Negative Declaration circulated on
☐ Negative Declaration adopted on

☒ Exempt
☐ Environmental Review Incomplete

FILE HISTORY

Completed by: FLB

Annexation Title: Cottage Grove No. 3

Date: 12/01/1947

PLANNING DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION

☐ Recommend Approval
☒ Recommend Approval with Conditions
☐ Recommend Denial

Date _____

Approved by: _____

CURRENT OWNER / CONTACT

Neighborhood Housing Services
Silicon Valley, Attn: Rod Geiman
1156 N. 4th St.
San Jose, CA 95112

ARCHITECT

Studio S Squared Architecture
Attn: Eugene Sakai
19 N. 2nd St., Ste. 205
San Jose, CA 95113

PUBLIC AGENCY COMMENTS RECEIVEDCompleted by: FLB

Memos from Public Works, Fire, ESD, ALUC, Police, & SNI

Other Departments and Agencies

None

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE

None

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BACKGROUND

On February 28, 2005, the applicant, Neighborhood Housing Services Silicon Valley, filed a Planned Development Rezoning, File No. PDC05-019, to rezone the subject properties from CP Commercial Pedestrian and R-2 Two Family Residence to A(PD) Planned Development to allow up to 17 single-family attached residential units on a 0.75 gross acre site at the northeast corner of Almaden Avenue and W. Alma Avenue. The property is currently vacant.

The subject site is relatively flat and is irregular in shape, with approximately 180 feet of frontage on W. Alma Avenue and 190 feet of frontage along Almaden Avenue. The site is surrounded by single-, two-, and multi-family residential uses to the north, east, and west and by vacant properties to the west and south across Almaden and Alma Avenues, respectively.

Project Description

The proposed Planned Development Zoning would allow up to 17 single-family attached affordable residential units in six structures on the subject site. The proposed residences are three stories with a maximum height of approximately 33 feet. Proposed building materials include stone veneer accents, composition shingle roofing, cement fiber lap siding, and cement fiber board and batten siding. The applicant proposes vehicular access to the units off of a common driveway from W. Alma Avenue. Each unit would have a two-car garage. Six of the seventeen units would have a two-car garage with a tandem parking arrangement. Four guest parking spaces are proposed on-site. Private open space is proposed in the form of balconies, porches, and small yards. Common open space is proposed on the east side of the site with a common garden and a tot-lot. A reduced copy of the plan set is attached for your reference.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Director of Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement determined that the project is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review under the Statutory Exemption in Section 15280 of the State Guidelines for Implementation of the CEQA. Section 15280 applies

to lower-income housing projects that meet certain criteria. The criteria and a discussion of how the proposed project meets these criteria are included in the attached Statement of Exemption on page A-2.

ANALYSIS

The primary issues analyzed for this project involve conformance with the General Plan, as well as with the Residential Design Guidelines in terms of compatibility with surroundings, parking, and open space. Further analysis evaluated the project's response to neighborhood concerns.

General Plan Conformance

The subject site is designated Medium High Density Residential (12-25 du/ac) on the San Jose 2020 General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram. With 17 units proposed on the subject 0.75 gross acre site, the proposed density calculates to 22.6 du/ac. This density conforms to the General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram density. Furthermore, this project furthers the General Plan Housing Policies by providing housing opportunities to meet the needs of lower-income members of the community in a stable neighborhood where adequate urban services are already provided.

Residential Design Guidelines Conformance

Compatibility with Surroundings

Massing

The area surrounding the subject site is generally characterized by single-family and two-family residential structures. Rather than attaching all of the units to create a continuous building mass along Alma or Almaden Avenues, the project has broken up the residential units into separate buildings containing three or two units each. This response to the surrounding detached residences helps the project to blend with its surroundings.

The current plans identify a maximum building height of 32'8." The proposed development standards call for a maximum height of 35 feet, with the exception of the one tower element at the corner of Alma and Almaden, which extends to approximately 38' in height. The 35-foot maximum height equals that for the adjacent properties in the R-2 Two Family Residence Zoning District and is less than the 50-foot maximum height of the adjacent CP Commercial Pedestrian Zoning District to the east. While the proposed height is greater than that of the existing structures in the immediate vicinity, the surrounding structures have the potential to build to the same height. The current plans show only the peaks of the side-gabled roof structures reaching a height of approximately 33 feet, and the roof peak is setback approximately 45 feet from Almaden Avenue, further diminishing the appearance of the building mass. While the 3-story structures are a half-story more than what could be allowed in the adjacent R-2 Two

Family Residence Zoning Districts, the third story is setback from Almaden Avenue and concealed well with the use of dormer windows with shed roofs.

As discussed below in more detail, staff is recommending amended setbacks to address the interface with the surrounding area. With these amended setbacks incorporated, staff believes that a height increase of up to 50 feet and four stories should be allowed. General Plan height limits would allow development up to a maximum height of 50 feet. Staff believes that development of structures reaching up to 50 feet in height and four stories could be accommodated on-site in a manner that is sensitive to the surrounding uses.

Setbacks

The Residential Design Guidelines recommend specific setbacks for residential structures based on proposed number of stories and the adjacent uses.

The proposed plans call for a 5-foot setback from the northern property line for the proposed three-story structure. Given the adjacent single-family detached residential use to the north and the proposed three-story structure, the Residential Design Guidelines include a standard of two feet of setback for every one foot of building height to allow an adequate buffer between existing and proposed residential uses. Adhering to these standards would push the structures to over 60 feet from the northerly property line. Staff does not feel that this setback is appropriate because it would take up a significant portion of the site area and result in a substantial reduction in the overall number of units. For a three-story building element or greater, staff believes that a 25-foot setback from the northern property line would allow for a sufficient landscape buffer between the project and the adjacent single-family residence and would therefore meet the intent of the Residential Design Guidelines setback standards.

For a two-story building element, the Residential Design Guidelines state that the setbacks can match that of the existing residential development. Therefore, as an alternative to the current plan, staff suggests the use of a two-story element adjacent to the single-family detached residence to the north. With a two-story element proposed, staff would support a 5-foot setback from the northerly property line. Both standards (\geq three-story element setback and $<$ three story element setback) have been incorporated into the draft development standards attached to this report.

Along Alma Avenue to the east, the majority of the development is built with no front setback. Immediately to the east, the single-family residence is developed with approximately a 15-foot front setback. The applicant is proposing 5-foot minimum setbacks from the W. Alma Avenue property line, with 2-foot minimum setbacks for porches. Given the existing pattern of development along W. Alma, staff believes that reduced setbacks are appropriate at that location; however, staff feels that a minimum 5-foot setback should be maintained, even for porches, to allow adequate space for landscaping.

Along the east side of Almaden Avenue, the development pattern is mixed. Directly to the north, the single-family residence has a setback of approximately 26 feet. The other four developed

properties have front setbacks of approximately 10, 70, 6, and 8 feet, respectively. The one vacant property on the block has a R-2 Two Family Residence Zoning designation and would typically need to adhere to a 20-foot front setback, however, given the existing and proposed pattern of developments, they would potentially be able to develop with a much smaller front setback in the range of 10 to 15 feet. Given the existing pattern of development north of the site, staff believes the proposed 15-foot building setback along Almaden Avenue is appropriate.

To the east, a community garden and common open space area would separate the proposed development from the existing single-family detached residence, thereby creating approximately 35 feet of separation between the existing and proposed structures. Staff believes this is more than adequate to offset the height difference. Additionally, Building 2 adjacent to the easterly property line contains only two units and two-stories, and thus, is slightly lower in height than its three-unit counterparts.

Parking

The Residential Design Guidelines contain parking ratios based on unit type, number of bedrooms per unit, and parking configuration. Based on the above ratios, 45 parking spaces are required on-site. The Zoning Ordinance, in Section 20.90.220 (A), notes that projects located within 2,000 feet of an existing or planned light rail station may utilize a reduction in parking of up to 10%. In addition to the nearby Tamien transit station, the subject site is also served by nearby VTA bus routes, with the Route 82 bus being the closest with two stops within 2,000 feet. Therefore, using the same logic as that implored in Section 20.90.220 (A) of the Municipal Code and given the proximity of transit options and the ease in which Downtown jobs can be accessed using public transit, staff believes that a parking reduction of 10% would be appropriate. A 10% reduction would result in a parking requirement of 40.5 parking spaces. A total of 38 spaces are proposed as part of the subject development, so the development currently falls three spaces short of meeting the Residential Design Guidelines parking standards. Staff would recommend that the revised plans respond to the above noted development standard changes and meet the parking standards set forth in the Residential Design Guidelines with the allowance of a 10% reduction for proximity to public transportation.

Open Space

The Residential Design Guidelines recommend 60 square feet of private open space with a minimum dimension of 6 feet for each cluster-housing unit. The proposal shows 15 of the 17 units with more than 180 square feet of private open space. The remaining two units have 80 and 52 square feet, respectively. With the exception of one unit, the proposed project well exceeds the minimum guidelines for private open space.

The Residential Design Guidelines recommend 200 square feet of common open space for each cluster-housing unit. With approximately 4,100 square feet of common open space, the project provides approximately 240 square feet of common open space per unit. A community garden is proposed in a portion of the common open space area, and staff supports this attempt by the applicant to make the area more useful. A tot lot is proposed in the common open space at the

northeastern corner of the subject site. Staff is concerned that the tot lot may have negative impact on the rear yard areas of the adjacent single-family residences. At the Planned Development Permit stage, staff will recommend a more passive use of this area such as a community garden that is less likely to impact adjacent residences. Staff supports the amount of common and private open space proposed by the subject project.

Neighborhood Concerns

Parking is the number one concern of the neighbors, and as such, the applicant redesigned the project to accommodate additional parking on-site. One-car garages were extended to two-car tandem garages, and open spaces were reduced to accommodate guest parking spaces between the buildings. The current plan shows four guest spaces proposed within the project area, and each unit would now have a two-car garage. Staff feels that on-site parking has been significantly improved over previous proposals, however, the community's request to meet the Residential Design Guidelines parking standards on-site is not completely addressed.

The community was also concerned with the security of the common open space area, particularly given that the proposed tot-lot is at the rear of the site. The applicant has proposed fencing off the entire common open space area on the eastern and northeastern perimeter of the site. Staff will ensure at the PD Permit stage that this fence prohibits entry from non-residents while allowing for maximum visibility. The easterly residences front towards this area, so this configuration should assist in surveillance of the area by the residents. Staff will work with the Police at the PD Permit stage to ensure adequate lighting of the area. Additional community concerns are found in the attached memo from the SNI Division.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The applicant presented the proposal at the regular meeting of the Washington Area Community Coalition on Thursday, May 12, 2005. The major issues raised at the meeting are discussed above and summarized in the attached memorandum. Notice of the public hearing was mailed to all owners and occupants within 500 feet of the subject site, and the dates of the public hearings have been noticed in a local newspaper. Planning staff has been available to discuss the proposal with members of the public. Additionally, prior to the Planning Commission public hearing, an electronic version of the staff report was made available online, accessible from the Planning Commission agenda, on the Planning Divisions' website.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the City Council to approve the proposed Planned Development Rezoning with the following conditions:

1. Provide a 5-foot landscaped setback from the southerly property line along Alma Avenue.

2. On the northern property line, provide a 25-foot setback for any building elements equal to or greater than 3 stories. Provide a 5-foot setback for any building elements that are less than 3 stories.
3. Provide on-site parking that conforms to the Residential Design Guidelines with up to a 10 percent reduction due to the site's proximity to alternative modes of travel, including a passenger rail station.
4. Maximum height shall be 50 feet.
5. Maximum number of stories shall be 4.

For the following reasons:

1. The project conforms to the General Plan Land Use/Transportation Diagram designation of Medium High Density Residential (12-25 du/ac).
2. The project is consistent with the Washington Neighborhood Revitalization Plan.
3. The project is consistent with the compatibility, parking, and open space guidelines in the Residential Design Guidelines.
4. The project is compatible with existing and planned uses in the surrounding neighborhood.

Attachments: Maps
 Exemption
 Development Standards
 Agency Memos
 Plan set